JOHNSON LIFE IN THE ROLLER MILL

In those gone-away days, bread was baked with homemade yeast, and Mrs. Johnson always kept several 2 quart bottles filled with live yeast so that when people came to the mill and told Mr. Johnson that the flour wasn't good he would send them to the house to get a new start of yeast, so that the next batch of bread that they made from the flour would be satisfactory. Mrs. Johnson often soaked strips of gauze in the bottles of live yeast, and then dried the gauze, then alternately soaked and dried them until the gauze was thoroughly saturated with the yeast. Then when the gauze was dried she mailed them in envelopes to different people around the country who needed a new start of yeast. When these strips of gauze were delivered the women would put the strip of gauze in a bottle of warm potato water and sugar and thereby get a new start of yeast.

The family at the mill always kept a flock of chickens, a few turkeys, and quite a flock of geese and ducks. The ducks and geese would swim on the mill pond and in the springtime when the geese were laying eggs they would be locked up in a shed at night until they had laid their eggs in early morning. Otherwise if they were left out in the water they laid their eggs along the banks of the pond in the water, and most often the eggs were chilled and wouldn't hatch. But by locking them up in the shed until morning the eggs were fertile and were hatched in an incubator, and a large flock of geese were raised every year. They were very delicious. Baked goose is undoubtedly one of the finest meals that you can be served.

Each spring when the geese began to shed their feathers, the feathers would be plucked off the breast of the geese where the down and small feathers are, and these feathers then would be made into feather beds and pillows, so that they furnished a comfortable place to sleep; especially warm and nice in the winter time. These feathers taken from the geese would have been just naturally shed at this time of the year, and it was not painful for the goose to have the feathers plucked. It was a relief to them, because in the hot weather they were uncomfortable for the goose anyway. It was quite easy to lay the goose on his back on a gunny sack, between your knees, with his head down so he couldn't bite you, and the feathers would just rub off in handfuls, so it was an easy matter to pluck the geese.

Mr. Johnson always had a large herd of pigs, because in the mill there were lots of waste grains - screenings, they were called. When the wheat was dumped on the mill it went throught screens that took out the wild oats, weed seeds, and contaminating substances, and most farmers didn't want to sow these seeds back on their farms, so they just left them at the mill, and this is what the pigs would eat. There was a pig farm that went down from off the bluff where they were fed, down into the bottoms where there was a slough in the warm weather; and in the winter time they slept under the bluff in a cave, out of the storm and the wind. It was an ideal place to raise pigs, and they supplemented the income of the mill and provided the family with fresh meat, and helped considerably in the economic struggle that early-day people had in this valley.

The day Mr. Johnson bought the mill, the creamery that was situated in the hollow south of the mill mysteriously caught fire in the night and burned to the ground. Of course there was no fire department and no way of putting the fire out, and about all

Bodine Home
+ Lala

